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# ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RECORD

NUMBER: CO-KRFO-00-03 EA

PROJECT NAME: Kremmling Resource Management Plan Amendment - Land Acquisition Land Use Planning Priorities

# **LEGAL DESCRIPTION:**

Parcel NP-1		
T. 7N., R. 80W.,	Section 23:	SW¼SE¼;
	Section 25:	E½NW¼;
	Section 26:	W½NE¼, NE¼NW¼, S½NW¼,
		SW <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> , W <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> SE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> ;
	Section 27:	E½SW¼, SW¼SW¼, SE¼;
	Section 28:	SE1/4;
	Section 34:	NW¼NE¼, NW¼;
Parcel NP-2		
T. 10N., R. 79W.,	Section 2:	Lot 2
T. 11N., R. 79W.,	Section 35:	E½SW¼
2. 22.11, 2.11 1.7 1.11	Section 34:	N½SE¼ easement
	Section 35:	W½SW¼ easement
Parcel NP-3		
T. 7N., R. 79W.,	Section 27:	S½SW¼ (portion west of State Highway 125)
·	Section 28:	SW14SW14, S14SE14
	Section 29:	SE¼NE¼, NW¼NW¼
	Section 30:	Lots 2, 3, 4, NE1/4NE1/4, W1/2E1/2, E1/2W1/2
	Section 31:	Lots 1. 2, NW1/4NE1/4, SE1/4NE1/4, E1/2NW1/4
	Section 32:	NE¼, E½NW¼, SW¼NW¼
•	Section 33:	W½NE¼, NW¼, NE¼SW¼, NW¼SE¼
	Section 34:	E½SE¼ (portion west of State Highway 125)
	Section 35:	SW1/4 (portion west of State Highway 125)
T. 7N., R. 80W.,	Section 27:	W½NE¼, SE¼NE¼, NE¼NW¼
Parcel MP-1		
T. 3N., R. 82 W.,	Section 26:	Lot 1;
, i	Section 27:	Tract 48:
Parcel MP-2		
T. 2N., R. 81W.,	Section 14:	NE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> NE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> , NW <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> NW <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> (portion north of State Highway 134)

Parcel MP-3		
T. 2N., R. 79W.,	Section 32:	E½W½;
,		
Parcel MP-4		
T. 1N., R. 79W.,	Section 7:	SE'4NE'4;
•	Section 8:	SW¼NW;
D IMD 5		
Parcel MP-5	Section 22:	SE14NE14, E12SE14;
T. 1N., R. 80W.,	Section 23:	SW'4NE'4, S½NW'4, SW'4, SE'4;
	Section 25:	W½SW¼,NW¼NW¼;
	Section 26:	N½NE¼, SW¼NE¼, NW¼,
	occion 20.	N½SW¼, SE¼SE¼;
	Section 27:	E½;
	Section 34:	SE¼NE¼, SW¼NW¼, NW¼SW¼,
		S½SW¼, W½SE¼, NE¼SE¼;
	Section 35:	E½NE¼, NE¼SE¼, SW¼SE¼;
T. 1S., R. 80W.,	Section 1:	Lot 7, SW1/4NW1/4;
	Section 2:	Lots 5-8, SW1/4NE1/4, S1/2NW1/4,
		N½SW¼, SE¼NE¼;
	Section 3:	Lot 9, NE4/SE1/4;
	Section 4:	Lot 5, SE1/4NE1/4, NE1/4SE1/4;
Parcel MP-6	a .: 05	A TOTAL C
T. 1N., R. 80W.,	Section 25:	NE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> ;
Parcel MP-7		
T. 1S., R. 78W.,	Section 28:	SW1/4SW1/4 (portion thereof);
21 201, 211 7 0 11 1,	Section 29:	SE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> SE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> (portion thereof);
	Section 31:	SE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> , NW <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> NE <sup>1</sup> / <sub>4</sub> (portion thereof),
		S½NE¼ (portion thereof);
	Section 32:	SW1/4. NE1/4 (portion thereof), S1/2NW1/4 (portion
,		thereof), W½SE¼ (portion thereof);
	Section 33:	W½NW¼ (portion thereof);
T. 2S., R. 78W.,	Section 5:	Tract 37 (portion thereof);
	Section 6:	Tract 38 (portion thereof);
D LIMB 0		
Parcel MP-8		
T. 1S., R. 78W.,	Section 27:	All;
Parcel MP-9		
T. 2N., R. 79W.,	Section 19:	SEL/NEL/ EL/SEL/
1. 211. IX. / 7 TY .,	Section 19:	SEWNEW SWANDY SWALL STANDARD
	Section 29:	SW¼NE¼, S½NW¼, SW¼. NW¼SE¼ NW¼NW¼
	500000 £9.	TA AA 24TA AA 24

Parcel MP-10

T. 5N., R. 81W., Section 33: Lots 10 & 15;

Parcel MP-11

T. 2N., R. 79W., Section 30: E½SE¼ (portion east of County Road 2);

APPLICANT: This action is a planning amendment initiated by the BLM.

#### INTRODUCTION

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED ACTION: The Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP) would be amended to establish land use planning priorities for specific parcels of land acquired by the Kremmling Field Office since the original RMP was completed in December, 1984. Numerous parcels of land have been acquired through land exchange, donation, or transfer of jurisdiction in the Kremmling Field Office. In most situations, the purpose of acquisition of the properties was similar to the land use priority for adjacent public lands, and plan maintenance was completed to incorporate these lands into the RMP. This proposed RMP amendment would establish land use planning prescriptions and land use priorities for those parcels of acquired properties with different management direction than adjacent public lands. Changes would also be made to the RMP to facilitate establishing land management prescriptions and land use priorities for future land acquisitions during the environmental analysis of each proposed acquisition.

PLAN CONFORMANCE REVIEW: The proposed action is subject to the following plan:

Name of Plan: Kremmling Resource Area, Resource Management Plan and Record of Decision

Date Approved: December 19, 1984

The proposed management prescriptions have been reviewed for conformance with this plan (43 CFR 1610.5, BLM 1617.3).

REMARKS: The proposed action is not in conformance with the existing RMP. This action would identify management prescriptions and land use priorities for specific parcels of land acquired since the original RMP was approved in December, 1984. Changes would also be made to the RMP to facilitate establishing land management prescriptions and land use priorities for future land acquisitions during the environmental analysis of each proposed acquisition.

## COLORADO STANDARDS FOR PUBLIC LAND HEALTH:

The administrative action of designating a land use priority would not have an appreciable impact on the Standards of Public Land Health (Soils. Standard #1; Wetlands, Standard #2; Vegetation/Wildlife, Standard #3; Threatened and Endangered Species, Standard #4; Water Quality, Standard #5). During the ongoing rangeland permit renewal process, Land Health Standards were addressed for several of the parcels in association with public lands in adjoining range allotments. This includes parcels MP-3, MP-5, MP-6, MP-7, MP-11, NP-2, and NP-3. Where appropriate, the relationship of the proposed action to the Land Health Standards is discussed in the affected environment/environmental impacts portion of

this environmental assessment. Public Land Health would be addressed for the remaining parcels during future rangeland permit renewals or other land management actions.

#### RELATIONSHIP TO STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OR OTHER PLANS:

The proposed action to amend the RMP is made under the authority of Sections 202 and 302 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 as amended (FLPMA).

# ISSUES AND CONCERNS

<u>PUBLIC SCOPING</u>: A Notice of Intent of the Plan Amendment was mailed to 150 individuals on August 23, 1999. As a result of the Notice very limited public comment was received. The comments were considered during preparation of this document.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS: The FLPMA requires land use planning for all public lands administered by the BLM. This action would bring lands acquired by the Kremmling Field Office under the umbrella of the RMP, and additionally provide the mechanism to ensure any lands acquired in the future are incorporated into the RMP during processing of the specific land acquisition.

#### PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

<u>PROPOSED ACTION</u>: The RMP would be amended to establish land use planning priorities for specific parcels of land acquired in the Kremmling Field Office since the original RMP was completed in December, 1984.

The environmental assessment for each individual land acquisition usually identified the purpose of acquisition and established a framework for future management. The lands are generally being managed within that framework and this amendment would formally solidify the land use planning for individual parcels of land.

Land use priorities as established in the 1984 RMP would be applied to the lands being addressed in this RMP amendment. The management emphasis associated with each land use priority is explained in the 1984 RMP. This includes identified compatible and excluded uses. This proposed RMP amendment would have no affect on the land use priority definitions as identified in the 1984 RMP. As explained on the 1985 Kremmling Resource Management Plan Land Use Priorities Map, the (Limited) designation indicates "Use of off-road vehicle is subject to restrictions deemed appropriate by the Area Manager. Restrictions may limit dates and time of use, limit use to designated roads and trails, limit the types of vehicles allowed and similar matters." The proposed action would "limit" vehicle use to designated roads and trails on all of the parcels being evaluated in this RMP amendment.

The following identified land use priorities represent the proposed action being addressed in this environmental assessment. The specific parcels of land, as well as the associated proposed land use priorities, are reflected on the attached maps.

# Parcel Number Land Use Priority

NP-1	Wildlife (Limited)
NP-2	Recreation (Limited)
NP-3	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-1	Recreation (Limited)
MP-2	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat)(Limited)
MP-3	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat)(Limited)
MP-4	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-5	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-6	Livestock Grazing and Water (along Barger Gulch) (Limited)
MP-7	Recreation (Limited)
MP-8	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-9	Livestock Grazing (Limited)
MP-10	No Priority (Limited)
MP-11	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat) (Limited)

In addition, the RMP would be amended to indicate environmental assessments prepared for future land exchanges or other land acquisitions would establish planning prescriptions and land use priorities for acquired lands as part of the acquisition process.

#### **ALTERNATIVES:**

No additional alternatives beyond the proposed action and no action alternative would be analyzed in this document.

#### NO ACTION:

Under the no action alternative, land use priorities would not be established for the acquired lands. This would leave the lands without benefit of clear planning direction. This would result in continued management controversy and is not acceptable from a statutory or regulatory perspective.

#### ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED BUT ELIMINATED:

The rationale for acquisition of the lands being considered in this document was considered during scoping discussions and/or environmental assessments prepared for each acquisition. This process exposed each acquisition to a thorough consideration of acquisition rationale and provided the decision maker with numerous alternatives for acquisition and future management. No other management options beyond those considered during the processing of each acquisition warrant further consideration at this time.

# AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT/ ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS/RESIDUAL IMPACTS

<u>GENERAL SETTING</u>: This proposal affects lands located throughout the Kremmling Field Office. The RMP provides a general overview, as well as specific descriptive information on the physical and social resources of the area. Information is referenced throughout this environmental assessment about

resource information generated during completion of rangeland health assessments for several livestock grazing allotments. These specific rangeland health assessments affect parcels MP-3, MP-5, MP-6, MP-7, MP-11, NP-2, and NP-3. That information is available in the following environmental assessments, which are on file in the Field Office:

MP-3..... EA-CO-018-99-26 MP-5......EA-CO-018-99-69 MP-11... EA-CO-018-99-69 NP-2......EA-CO-018-99-32 NP-3.... EA-CO-018-99-33 MP-6......EA-CO-018-99-69

MP-7..... USFS's Skylark/Mule Creek Cattle & Horse Allotment Environmental Assessment

#### CRITICAL ELEMENTS

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Affected Environment: The parcels described in the proposed action are primarily used by, and located adjacent to lands owned by nonminority populations and higher income populations. These owner and user populations include ranchers, wealthy property owners, hunters, and recreationists.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Assigning land use priorities to parcels of acquired land would not have a disproportionate impact on racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic groups.

## INVASIVE, NONNATIVE SPECIES

Affected Environment: Some of the acquired parcels have small populations of invasive, nonnative species present, primarily noxious weeds. BLM has an active weed control program.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Assigning land use priorities to parcels of acquired land would not have an impact on the BLM's ability to treat and control invasive, nonnative species.

#### AIR QUALITY

Affected Environment: Air quality in the Resource Area is believed to be good. The air quality section in the RMP details local conditions and is still generally accurate, except that the tepee burners in North and Middle Park have been removed since the plan was written.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Designating land use priorities for the acquired parcels does not impact air quality.

#### CULTURAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: Cultural resources inventory has not been completed for the acquired lands. The potential for discovery of cultural resources is considered low to high depending on land forms and elevation, proximity to and elevation above water, aspect, and availability of floral/faunal and lithic resources. Thus, the potential varies from parcel to parcel, and even within individual parcels.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed action of assigning land use priorities to acquired lands would not affect cultural resources. Cultural resources would be protected by Federal Law. Site specific actions taken as a result of acquisition and assignment of land use priorities would

require authorization through a separate environmental analysis, which would in turn require cultural inventory. Cultural sites discovered and recorded through cultural inventory would be evaluated for eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places, and protected, avoided or mitigated. Appropriate consultations would be completed with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the National Programmatic Agreement, and the Colorado SHPO/BLM Protocol.

# FLOODPLAINS, WETLANDS, RIPARIAN ZONES, AND ALLUVIAL VALLEYS (Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. Standard #2 and wetland vegetation information for Standard #3)

#### Affected Environment:

Most of the acquired lands have not been extensively inventoried for wetland values. As part of the rangeland health assessments, some of the areas were assessed for Land Health Standard #2 and wetland vegetation components of Standard #3. Parcels that have been assessed are: MP-3, MP-5, MP-6, MP-7, MP-11, NP-2, and NP-3. The assessed parcels were meeting the Land Health Standards, except parcel NP-3. Most of the areas support sedge-rush communities, except parcel MP-7 which supports a willow-sedge community. Parcel NP-2 does not actually contain a riparian area but is part of an allotment that contains Government Creek, which has been heavily impacted by cattle and ORVs. Parcel NP-3 contains a portion of Soap Creek and its tributary/irrigation ditch, which have been severely impacted by transporting large diversions of irrigation water. The natural channel was not designed to carry such flows and is now in a non-functioning condition.

The rest of the parcels have the potential for wetland or riparian values, and would probably be eventually assessed as part of the grazing permit renewal process or other proposed land use action.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed land use priorities could all be compatible with floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and alluvial valleys. Management actions on the proposed land use priorities could involve activities that would negatively impact floodplains, wetlands, riparian zones, and alluvial valleys. When specific land use proposals are reviewed, Federal laws require protection of these resources and they must be compatible. The proposed designations alone would not generally impact these values. Sulphur Gulch would not be designated for a water land use priority, although it is a manageable stretch of stream. Due to its high salt content and warm temperatures, the stream would not be managed for water quality in the traditional sense. The unique environment created by the springs, however, does support two unique riparian plant communities that are not generally found on the west slope. Parcel MP-3 contains several of the seeps that feed Sulphur Gulch and support this riparian community. Parcel MP-4 contains a portion of Sulphur Gulch.

#### NATIVE AMERICAN RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

Affected Environment: There are no known Native American religious, traditional use or burial locations within the acquired lands. However, no cultural resource inventories have been completed that could serve to assist in the identification of these resources.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Assigning land use priorities to acquired lands would not affect Native American religious, traditional use or burial locations. Site specific actions taken as a result of acquisition and assignment of land use priorities would require authorization through a separate

environmental analysis, which would in turn require cultural inventory and identification of Native American resources or areas of concern.

#### PRIME AND UNIQUE FARMLANDS

Affected Environment: There are no prime or unique farmlands in any of the acquired parcels.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: No prime or unique farmlands would be impacted by the proposed action.

#### SOILS

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. Standard #1)

Affected Environment: The Resource Management Plan discusses the soils of the North and Middle Park Areas. During renewal of rangeland grazing permits, Land Health Standard #1 was assessed on parcels MP-3, MP-5, MP-6, MP-7, MP-11, NP-2, and NP-3. An allotment specific discussion of the soils is included in the environmental assessment written for each renewal. Most of the areas were meeting Standard #1 except for portions of parcel MP-5 that had been vegetatively treated in the 1950s. The remaining areas would be assessed during future grazing permit renewals or prior to other land use actions.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: All of the proposed land use priorities can be compatible with soil resources. If specific projects or land actions are reviewed for best management practices to reduce erosion and protect soil resources, then impacts to soils can be minimized. A wildlife designation in itself would not affect the acres within parcel MP-5 that are not currently meeting Land Health Standard #1. The proposed action would limit off-road vehicle use and reduce negative impacts to soil resources. The designation of these land use priorities does not represent a negative impact to soil resources.

#### THREATENED AND ENDANGERED SPECIES

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. Standard #4)

Affected Environment: Three of the acquired parcels, MP-2, MP-3, and MP-11, support Federally listed endangered plant species. The proposed protected area land use priority for these parcels is based on the presence of the endangered plant species. All three parcels support populations of Osterhout milkvetch (Astragalus osterhoutii), and parcels MP-3 and MP-11 additionally support populations of Penland beardtongue (Penstemon penlandii).

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The protected area land use priority proposed for parcels MP-2, MP-3, and MP-11 would establish these parcels as habitat for the continued existence of Osterhout milkvetch and Penland penstemon. The proposed action would limit off-road vehicle use on these parcels. These actions would be beneficial, and perhaps necessary, to protect the plant populations.

#### **VEGETATION**

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, All upland vegetation information for Standard #3)

#### Affected Environment:

#### Middle Park:

Parcel MP-1 is dominated by sagebrush grasslands on the uplands. The parcel has not been assessed for Land Health Standards, but would be assessed prior to changing management or implementing any specific land uses on the parcel.

Parcel MP-2 was acquired to protect a population of the endangered plant, Osterhout's milkvetch. This plant is found in an area typified by a kind of "badlands" dominated by rabbitbrush, sagebrush, sparse grasses and forbs. This parcel has not been assessed for Land Health Standards. A field visit is planned for FY 2000.

Parcel MP-3 was assessed for Land Health Standards in 1999 and determined to be meeting the vegetative portion of Standard #3.

Parcel MP-4 is dominated by sagebrush grasslands. This parcel has not been assessed for Land Health Standards, but would be assessed prior to changing management or implementing any specific land uses.

Parcel MP-5 is dominated by sagebrush and grasslands except for those areas on Lawson Ridge which include stands of aspen interspersed with open meadows. The Orr allotment which is intermixed with these parcels were assessed for Land Health Standards in 1999.

Parcel MP-6 is dominated by sagebrush grasslands. Barger Gulch, which runs through this parcel, was assessed for Properly Functioning Condition in 1999. The vegetation on the adjacent uplands appeared healthy and was meeting Land Health Standard #3.

Parcel MP-7. Vegetative health was assessed on parcel MP-7 in 1999. All upland sites were rated as meeting Land Health Standard #3.

Parcel MP-8 is characterized by lodgepole pine on the north facing slopes. The south facing slopes contain sagebrush with an understory of bunchgrasses and forbs. The are no known resource problems in the uplands and they are assumed to be meeting the vegetation portion of Land Health Standard #3.

Parcel MP-9 is located next to existing grazing allotments. One management option to be evaluated later, would be to combine the parcel with one of these allotments. This parcel would be assessed for Land Health Standards prior to any future actions.

Parcel MP-10 is located at approximately 9.000 feet. The vegetation is comprised of lodgepole pine and some fir on the upper end, and aspen groves with grassy clearings on the lower end. This parcel has not been formally assessed for Land Health Standards, however, a field trip in 1999 indicated that the vegetation portion of Standard #3 is being met.

Parcel MP-11. was assessed for Land Health Standards in 1999 and determined to be meeting the vegetative portion of Standard #3.

#### North Park:

Parcel NP-1 vegetation consists of a combination of a sagebrush vegetation type and salt shrub vegetation type as described in the RMP. This parcel has not been formally assessed for Land Health Standards but is scheduled for review in 2000. A grazing system was developed for the parcel in 1995, and has been in place for five years. Frequent observation of the area by Field Office personnel and other agency personnel indicate that this parcel is meeting Land Health Standard #3.

Parcel NP-2 vegetation consists of a sagebrush vegetation type as described in the RMP. This area is unique in that soils are very sandy and both needle grasses and bitter brush are more prevalent than on many other sagebrush sites on BLM land. This parcel was assessed for Land Health Standards in 1998 and it was found that approximately 100 acres were not meeting Standard #3 and 10 acres were. Livestock grazing was found to be a major cause and grazing practices have been modified in an attempt to improve the vegetative community in the area.

Parcel NP-3 vegetation consists primarily of a sagebrush vegetation type with inclusions of a salt shrub vegetation type as described in the RMP. The salt shrub vegetation occurs mainly in lower subirrigated areas along Soap Creek and the shores of MacFarlane Reservoir. This parcel was assessed in 1998 and found to be meeting Land Health Standard #3 (vegetation) on 2,444 acres of mostly sagebrush uplands away from Soap Creek. Approximately 345 acres located along Soap Creek were found to be "At Risk". Livestock grazing management was adjusted for the 1999 grazing season and on the Ten Year grazing permit issued in 1999 to move the 345 acres towards meeting Land Health Standard #3.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Amending the RMP to establish land use priorities would have no impact on vegetative health or change the BLM's obligation to manage vegetation to meet Land Health Standard #3.

#### WASTES, HAZARDOUS OR SOLID

#### Affected Environment:

There are no known hazardous wastes located on the acquired parcels. .

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Assigning land use priorities to parcels of acquired land would not have an impact on the BLM's ability to manage hazardous materials found or dumped on the parcels.

#### WATER QUALITY, SURFACE OR GROUND

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, Standard #5)

Affected Environment: The RMP describes the water quality in Middle and North Parks. There is only limited information on the specific water quality of the acquired lands, and it pertains to surface water quality. Water quality is generally good, except for the naturally occurring sulphur springs in parcel MP-3 that feed parcel MP-4. There are no known water quality concerns on any of the parcels. An assessment of the surface water quality for those parcels that were assessed during the grazing permit renewal process is included with each Environmental Assessment (EA). The remaining parcels would be assessed as part of the future grazing permit renewals or other land actions.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: In general, the proposed action identifies land use priorities that would not be expected to affect ground water quality. The land use priorities can all be compatible with water quality, depending on specific land use actions proposed. The proposed action would limit off-road vehicle use on all of the parcels. By limiting off-road vehicle use impacts to water quality would be reduced.

WILDERNESS, AREAS OF CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERN, WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

There are no Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas or Wild and Scenic River designations that would be affected by the proposed action.

The proposed action would have no impact on the two Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) managed by BLM within the Kremmling Field Office.

#### WILDLIFE, AQUATIC

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health, All aquatic wildlife information for Standard #3)

Affected Environment: Middle Park: Six of the eleven acquired parcels provide habitat for aquatic wildlife. In addition, parcels MP-1, MP-2, MP-7, are known to support trout populations. The remaining parcels with aquatic habitat, MP-3, MP-5, MP-6, contain perennial waters, however, no fish populations are known to exist in them. Sulphur Gulch which is located in parcel MP-3 is a perennial stream, however, due to the chemical composition of the water, it is not inhabited by aquatic wildlife. All the waters mentioned above with the exception of Sulphur Gulch support small numbers of waterbirds during the summer and early fall.

North Park: Parcels NP-1 and NP-3 provide aquatic wildlife habitat, primarily for aquatic mammals and waterbirds. The aquatic habitat found in these parcels primarily includes intermittent shallow ponds and reservoirs which are managed as waterbird habitat. Numerous species of ducks, shorebirds, and Canada geese utilize these waters from spring through fall annually. These habitats contribute a significant number of waterbirds to the total produced annually in Colorado.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The land use priority designated for each of the parcels is likely to benefit or at least be compatible with the aquatic habitat values provided by each. The parcels included in the Hebron Waterfowl Management Area (NP-1 and NP-3) have been managed with emphasis placed on waterfowl production. The proposed wildlife designation would reinforce habitat management productivity in this area. The proposed land use priorities being evaluated in the proposed action are likely to be compatible with aquatic wildlife values where they currently exist.

#### WILDLIFE. TERRESTRIAL

(Colorado Standards for Public Land Health. All terrestrial wildlife information for Standard #3)

Affected Environment: **Middle Park**: The acquired land included in the proposed action provide upland habitat for a variety of terrestrial wildlife species. These species include mule deer. Rocky Mountain elk, pronghorn antelope, sage grouse, blue grouse, birds of prey, songbirds and numerous species of small mammals. Winter use of some of the acquired parcels by deer, elk, and pronghorn is especially important since winter habitat is critical to the survival of these species. Parcels MP-3, MP-5, MP-8, MP-9, and MP-10 in Middle Park are especially important as winter habitat for these species.

North Park: Parcel NP-2 provides important winter habitat for deer and elk. All parcels in both Middle Park and North Park which provide sagebrush/grassland vegetation are important habitat for sage grouse, a species of special concern due to declines in populations throughout its range.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed land use designations are likely to be compatible with terrestrial wildlife habitat values. Those parcels which would be identified with a wildlife land use priority would be most beneficial to wildlife. Other land use priority designations could be compatible with wildlife, assuming habitat values for important species are considered in future management actions proposed on the parcels.

#### **NON-CRITICAL ELEMENTS**

#### ACCESS AND TRANSPORTATION

Affected Environment: All parcels are located in Jackson and Grand Counties adjacent to public lands managed by the BLM. Most of the parcels provide legal public access to adjacent BLM lands. Many of the parcels have existing roads and trails.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed action would limit vehicle use to designated roads and trails on all the parcels. No cross country travel would be permitted. Implementation of this decision would require an inventory to identify designated routes. Only those existing routes that are determined to be suitable for motorized use would be designated as open. Additional routes could be constructed to provide improved access, mitigate resource damage from existing routes, and/or provide recreational opportunities. Snowmobiles operating on snow would be exempted from this limitation. The proposed action of limiting vehicle to designated roads and trails would not impact access to or on the parcels.

#### **PALEONTOLOGY**

Affected Environment: The parcels lie in Middle Park(Grand County) and North Park (Jackson County) which consists of Mesozoic and Tertiary sedimentary rocks and Tertiary igneous rocks. Paleontologically important resources exist in some of the Tertiary and Mesozoic Formations in North and Middle Parks. Since these parcels have been brought into Federal ownership, Federal laws, regulations and policies now protect the Paleontologic resources at these parcels.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The land use priorities identified in the proposed action would have minimal impact on Paleontologic resources.

#### FOREST MANAGEMENT:

None of the parcels being evaluated in the proposed action are classified as commercial forest lands. Therefore, there would be no impact to forest management associated with this proposal.

#### **GEOLOGY AND MINERALS**

Affected Environment: The parcels all lie in the intermountain basins of North and Middle Parks in Grand and Jackson Counties. The two separate basins will be described separately below:

North Park (Jackson County) is an oil and gas rich basin consisting of Mesozoic and Tertiary sedimentary rocks and Tertiary igneous rocks. Oil and gas are currently produced in numerous fields and is an economically valuable resource. Coal resources are also present in North Park, with historic production and known reserves. The railroad was removed from North Park in the recent past, and no bulk shipping or reasonable haul routes currently exist for the coal there. The known coal resource in North Park is not currently economic, because of low coal prices and high transportation costs. The only near-economic hard rock resource in North Park is Flurspar, of which there are several historic mines, near Northgate, and near Pitchpine Mountain. These mines are currently shut down, but future production is possible, but only if the current economic scenario changes. Prospecting occurred for copper and gold in the past at the margins of the North Park basin, but the prospects were abandoned as uneconomic. Sand and gravel is an abundant resource throughout North Park.

Middle Park (Grand County) similarly consists of Mesozoic and Tertiary sedimentary rocks and Tertiary igneous rocks, however, the mineralized setting is rather different from North Park. There is no oil and gas production, and only low potential exists in Middle Park, except at a few isolated locations. No near-economic coal resources exist in the basin, and only small, low grade, isolated occurances are known. No valuable hard rock economic mineral resources exist in the basin. There was prospective interest in both copper and uranium in the past, but the prospects were abandoned as uneconomic. Abundant sand and gravel resources exist in Middle Park.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: Oil and gas leasing would not be precluded on any of the parcels being evaluated in this document, but could be subject to development restrictions. With the proposed wildlife (NP-1, NP-3, MP-4, MP-5, and MP-8), livestock grazing (MP-6 and MP-9), and water (MP-6) land use priority parcels, restrictions would be placed on development to protect the priority uses. The proposed recreation (NP-2, MP-1 and MP-7) land use priority parcels could involve no surface occupancy stipulations to protect developed recreation sites. This is not expected to impact oil and gas development, as there are currently no developed recreation sites on either of the proposed recreation land use priority parcels. The proposed protected area (MP-2, MP-3, and MP-11) land use priority parcels would be established to protect endangered plant habitat, and requires the use of surface occupancy stipulations to protect present values. The protected area priority in and by itself would not impact oil and gas development, as any future activity would be subject to Federal laws protecting Threatened and Endangered species habitat regardless of land use priority. Implementation of the above listed restrictions would be through no surface occupancy stipulations, timing limitations, or controlled surface use stipulations. Any oil and gas resources that may exist in these areas could still be developed, but may require directional drilling from adjacent land, or during seasonal periods when drilling activities would be allowed.

The proposed recreation (NP-2 and MP-7) and protected area (MP-2, MP-3, and MP-11) land use priority parcels would be closed to mineral material sales (primarily sand and gravel). Development of mineral materials on the proposed wildlife (NP-1, NP-3, MP-4, MP-5, and MP-8) land use priority parcels would be permissible provided it did not interfere with wildlife habitat values. The considerable volumes of sand and gravel and other mineral materials found throughout the Field Office would far overshadow the mineral materials potentially forgone on the above listed parcels as a result of the proposed action.

None of the proposed land use priorities would close any lands to mining for hardrock mineral resources. Restrictions could be placed on any future development to protect applicable land use priority resources. This would have minimal impact on mineral development, as there are no hardrock mineral resources of

any note at these parcels, except near parcels MP-5, MP-3 and MP-9. Old abandoned copper prospects lie on Junction Butte and in Elliot Creek near parcel MP-5, but have been long abandoned. The mineralization is weak, and no work has occurred at these prospects in over 30 years. Uranium was prospected and drilled for in the 1950s by the U.S. atomic energy commission near parcels MP-3 and MP-9 near Sulphur Gulch. No mining ever occurred and any mining claims in the area have been abandoned. These occurrences are not economically valuable.

Parcels NP-1 and NP-3 are located adjacent to coal land use priority areas as identified on the 1985 RMP Land Use Priority Map. A portion of NP-1 is currently designated as a coal priority area. The proposed action would identify all of these lands as a wildlife land use priority. The current economies of mining, shipping, and selling coal from North Park are poor, and the proposed wildlife land use priority would not impact coal development in the area. With the closing of an operating coal mine and the removal of the coal transportation railhead, the long term prospects for coal development in North Park are anticipated to remain poor.

#### HYDROLOGY AND WATER RIGHTS

Affected Environment: The parcels of land being addressed in the proposed action are all located in either Middle or North Park, Colorado. The RMP discusses the general hydrology of the two Parks. Water rights associated with the acquired parcels are discussed in the specific land acquisition environmental assessments. The parcels need to be inventoried for unadjudicated waters that could be filed on by the BLM for water rights. Parcel MP-9 has been inventoried and a water right filing has been prepared. The filing will not occur unless a grazing permit is issued for this parcel, so that livestock use can be quantified and claimed.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed land use priorities do not impact the water rights held by the BLM or by others. The BLM's ability to implement some land use actions would be affected by water rights as the BLM is subject to Colorado's administration of its appropriations doctrine. The proposed land use priorities do not affect the hydrology of the parcels. Any future proposed management actions or land use proposals, with mitigation or best management practices, could be compatible with water resources.

#### LAND STATUS/REALTY AUTHORIZATIONS

Affected Environment: Prior to acquisition by the BLM, all of the parcels of land being addressed by the proposed action were previously owned and/or administered by an enitity other than the Bureau of Land Management. All the involved lands were inholdings or located adjacent to existing public lands. The lands are undeveloped, with the exception of various road and utility easements which were included in the deed to the United States. These encumbrances do not adversely affect use of the lands by the United States.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The acquired lands are open to the operation of the public land laws and mineral laws, unless withdrawn or otherwise designated. They would be managed according to principles of multiple use and sustained yield and any plans developed by the BLM. The proposed action would facilitate establishing land use prescriptions and priorities for any future land acquisitions in the environmental document prepared for each specific acquisition. This would improve the efficiency of the land exchange/acquisition program.

The proposed action would identify parcels MP-2, MP-3, and MP-11 as protected areas for endangered plant habitat. As indicated in the RMP, this proposed land use priority would exclude major realty actions such as linear rights-of-way. Minor rights-of-way could be authorized on the parcels, assuming the endangered plants could be avoided. Because of the small size of the parcels, this should not create an impact to any future realty proposals. The land use priorities that would be identified for the remainder of the parcels would be compatible with future use of the property for specific realty authorizations, subject to site specific environmental analysis.

#### RANGE MANAGEMENT

Affected Environment: (See Vegetation section)

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action:

#### Middle Park:

Parcel MP-1, excluding Red Dirt Reservoir, is suitable for grazing and could be added to the surrounding state land grazing lease. Livestock use of the parcel would be compatible with the proposed recreation land use priority.

Parcel MP-2 is proposed as a protected land use priority area and should be evaluated for any conflict between livestock grazing and the continued health of Osterhout's milkvelch. Livestock grazing has occurred on this parcel for decades. If livestock grazing is undesirable on this parcel, it could be fenced out of the adjacent 40 acre Custodial allotment.

Parcels MP-3 and MP-11 have been grazed in conjunction with the surrounding BLM allotment for decades. There is no indication that livestock grazing is jeopardizing the existence of Osterhout's milkvetch or the Penstemon penlandii, and is compatible with the protected area land use priority. These parcels should be included in the Sulphur Gulch allotment.

Parcel MP-4 does not have any range management issues and livestock use of the parcel is compatible with the proposed wildlife land use priority.

Parcel MP-5 has been added to the Orr allotment and a grazing management system developed for the whole area. This system is compatible with the proposed wildlife land use priority.

Parcel MP-6 has also been added to the Orr allotment and would be identified with a livestock grazing land use priority. If enough additional water is available on the allotment, the small piece of Barger Gulch that runs through this parcel may be included in an exclosure. The purpose of the exclosure would be to create a reference area for monitoring other segments of Barger Gulch that are in need of improvement.

Parcel MP-7 is included in a combined BLM and USFS livestock grazing allotment. This use is compatible with the proposed recreation land use priority.

Parcel MP-8 is not suitable for livestock grazing and the proposed wildlife land use priority would have no impact on range management.

Parcel MP-9 is adjacent to other public lands with a livestock grazing land use priority. Establishing the

proposed livestock grazing land use priority for this parcel would be consistent with historic uses of the land.

Parcel MP-10 is included in the Diamond Creek Custodial livestock grazing allotment. The proposed action would identify these lands with no land use priority, similar to adjacent public lands.

#### North Park:

Parcel NP-1 is proposed to be made part of allotment 7110 and has been included in a management system that incorporates the wildlife objectives for the area. The grazing system specifically took into consideration waterfowl habitat requirements including nesting habitat. Monitoring at this time shows livestock grazing to be compatible with the proposed wildlife land use priority for the parcel. The grazing system includes wildlife considerations for other public lands adjacent to this parcel which have a livestock grazing land use priority. This effectively extends the wildlife land use priority objectives proposed for this parcel to surrounding public lands with different land use priorities.

Parcel NP-2 is located within allotment 7163, and would be identified with a recreation land use priority. Most of the public land in Allotment 7163 is located in the North Sandhills Special Recreation Management Area. Recreational activities during busy weekends affects livestock grazing by pushing livestock out of popular recreation areas and onto private lands and BLM lands in more remote areas. This causes livestock distribution problems and overgrazing in some portions of the allotment. Grazing practices on allotment 7163 are being modified to move this parcel towards meeting Land Health Standards #2 and #3. These modifications would also take into consideration the heavy recreational use periods, and attempt to minimize recreational conflicts with livestock grazing. As recreational activity increases in the area, the goals for the recreation land use priority may require that livestock use be curtailed even further in both the dates of use and the level of use. If these restrictions become severe enough livestock grazing may not be feasible on this parcel.

The proposed action identifies parcel NP-3 for a wildlife land use priority, primarily because of aquatic waterfowl habitat found on the parcel. The parcel is located within allotment 7150 which includes MacFarlane Reservoir. Livestock distribution has been a problem on the allotment with livestock congregating along Soap Creek and using the uplands only lightly. In 1999 an electric fence was used to defer the use on Soap Creek and improve distribution. A permanent fence is being planned to help with the management of livestock on the allotment in the future. The season-of-use has also been shortened on the allotment. These changes in livestock management are being developed to improve and maintain vegetation cover, diversity and production on both parcel NP-3 and other adjacent public lands with a livestock grazing land use priority. Livestock grazing is compatible with both designations and the proposed action would have little or no affect on range management.

#### RECREATION

Affected Environment: Existing recreational uses on the parcels being considered in the proposed action include: hunting, hiking, camping, mountain biking, wildlife viewing, fishing, and driving for pleasure. Many of the parcels would improve or provide recreation opportunities in the localized area associated with each parcel by improved access; acquiring lands with recreation opportunities; and blocking up public lands, which minimizes conflicts with private property.

There are no known conflicts with recreation management sections of the RMP. Parcel NP-2 is included within the boundary of the North Sand Hills Special Recreation Management Area (SRMA) and would be designated as a recreation land use priority. The parcel would additionally be included within the SRMA.

Off-Highway vehicle use would be limited to designated routes on all the parcels. (See Access and Transportation section.)

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed action would not have an adverse impact on the recreation resource.

#### VISUAL RESOURCES

Affected Environment: All parcels have been inventoried for the visual resource values. Visual Resource Inventory and Analysis was completed for the Kremmling Field Office in 1980 by the Craig District Landscape Architect. The VRM information is available from the Kremmling Field Office.

Environmental Consequences of Proposed Action: The proposed action would have no impact on Visual Resources.

#### CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

PERSONS/AGENCIES CONSULTED: The Notice of Intent for the proposed resource management plan amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in August, 1999. Very minimal comment was received. The comments were considered during preparation of this environmental analysis. Additional opportunities will be provided for public input with publication of the Notice of Availability and through the Governor's Consistency Review. Any additional comments received would be considered during preparation of the decision document for the RMP amendment.

<u>BLM INTERNAL COORDINATION</u>: The following individuals participated in the preparation of this document:

#### Kremmling Field Office:

Linda M. Gross, Field Manager
Jim Perry, Natural Resource Specialist
Paula Belcher, Hydrologist
Frank Rupp. Archaeologist
Chuck Cesar, Wildlife Biologist
Erik Taylor, Range Conservationist
Larry Lichthardt, Range Conservationist
John Arkins, Outdoor Recreation Planner
John Morrone. Geologist
Steve McCallie, Forester
Madeline Dzielak, Realty Specialist

#### **Northwest Center:**

David Atkins, Resource Advisor

# **ATTACHMENTS:**

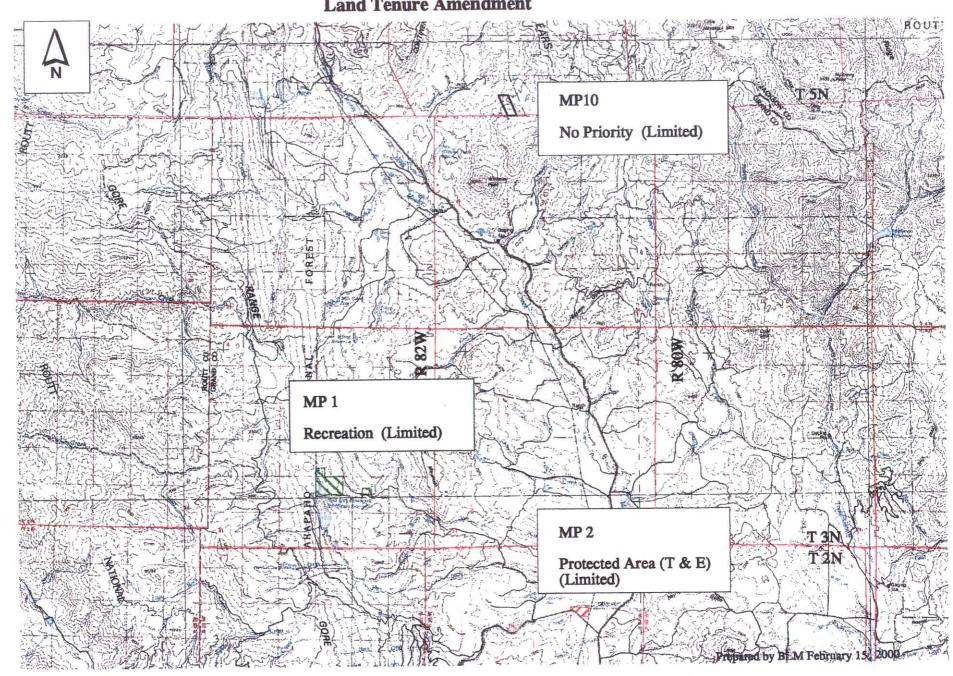
Land Use Priority for Land Tenure Adjustments
(Series of five maps depicting Proposed Action Land Use Priorities)

#### **FONSI**

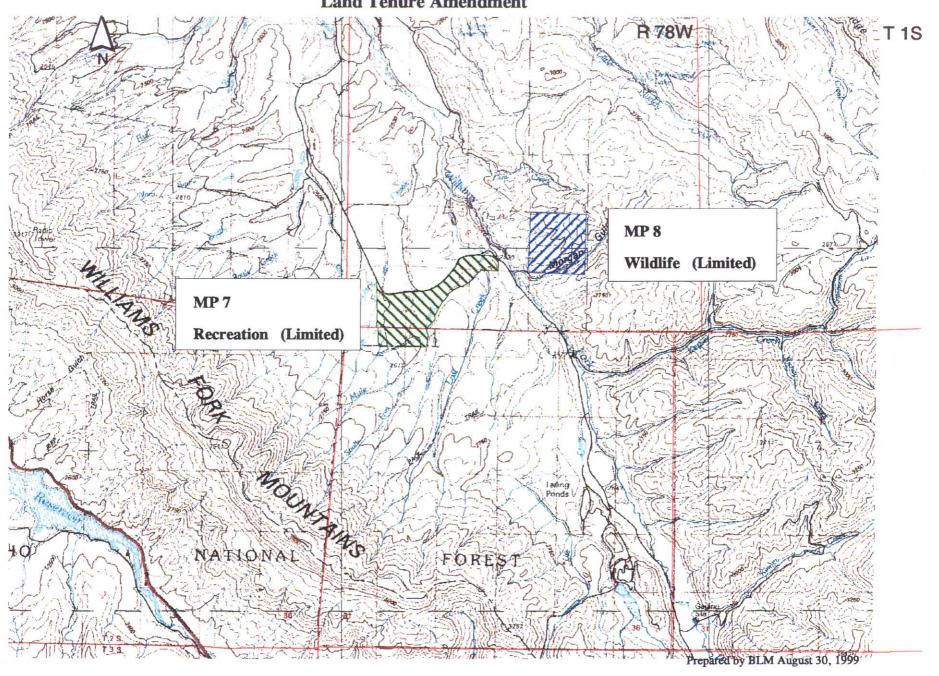
Based on the analysis of environmental impacts contained in the attached Environmental Assessment, I have determined that the impacts are not considered to be significant and result in a <u>finding of no significant impact</u> on the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary to further analyze the environmental effects of the proposed action. The preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

PRINCIPAL AUTHOR:	Date:	3/24/00
ENVIRONMENTAL COORDINATOR:	Date: _	3/24/00
SIGNATURE OF FIELD OFFICE MANAGER:		2///
my/// hon	Date:	3/24/2000

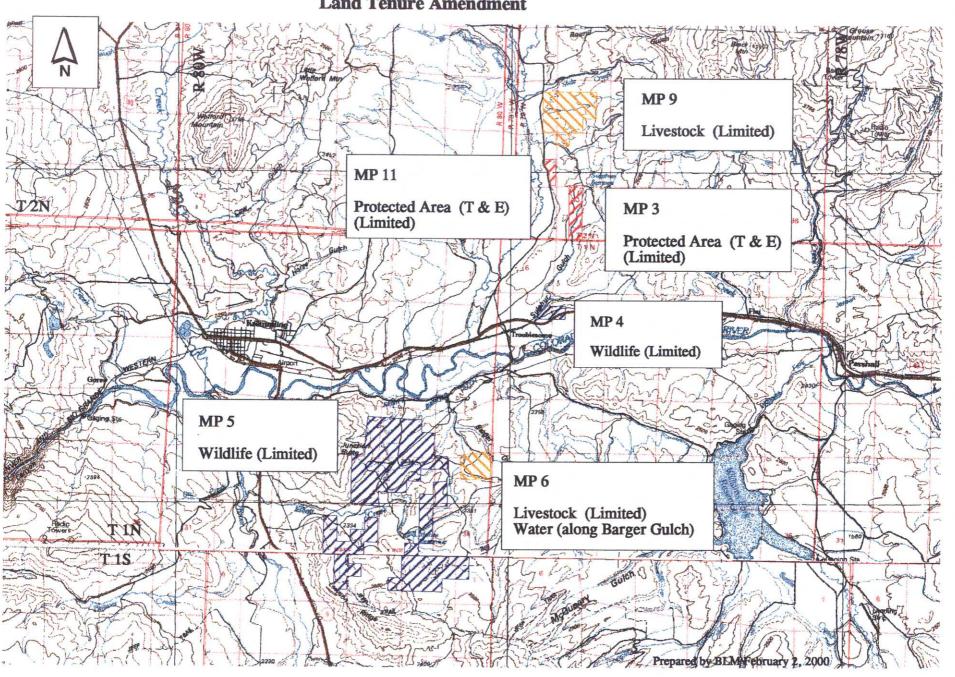
Land Use Priority for Land Tenure Amendment

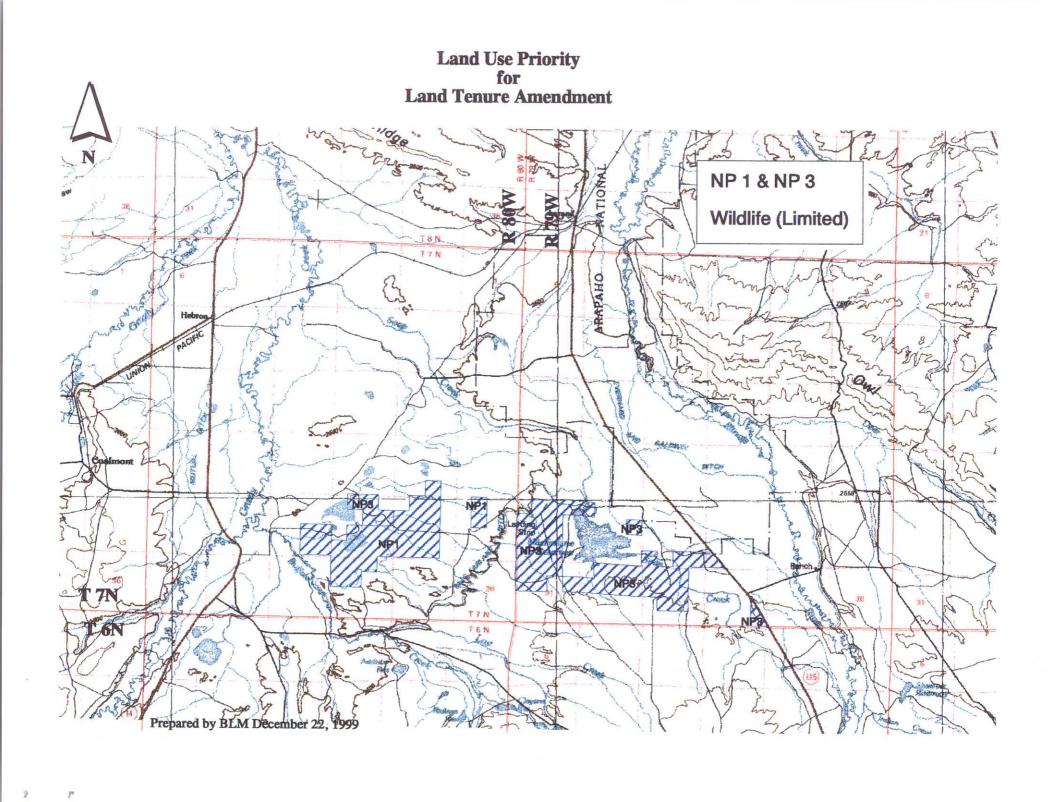


Land Use Priority for Land Tenure Amendment

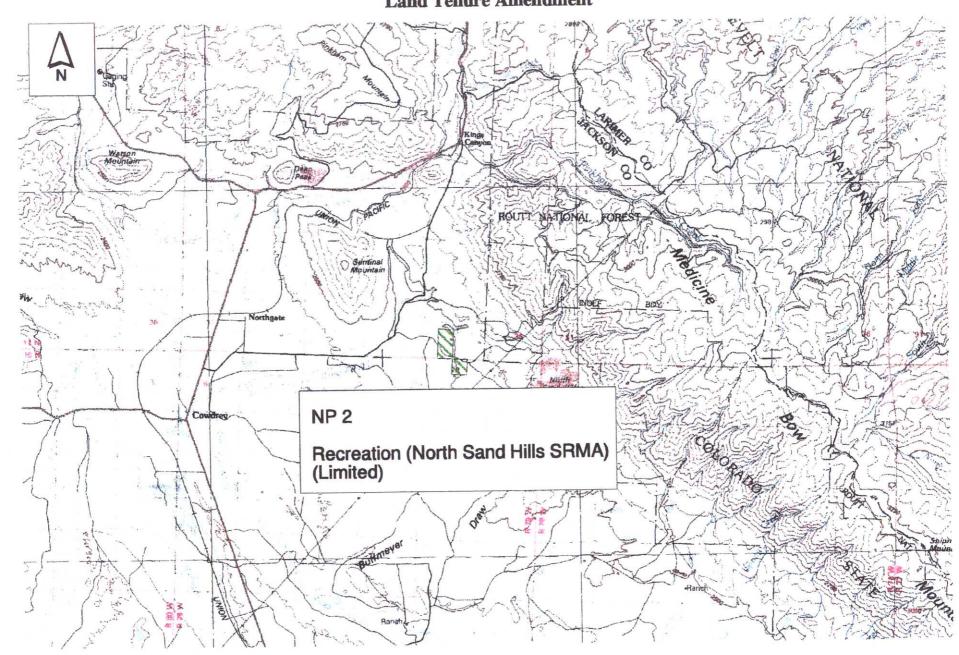


Land Use Priority for Land Tenure Amendment





Land Use Priority for Land Tenure Amendment



# U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR Bureau of Land Management Kremmling Field Office

Decision Record and Resource Management Plan Amendment

Land Acquisition
Land Use Priorities

June 2000

Prepared by the
U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Kremmling Field Office
Kremmling, Colorado

## Decision Record

# Land Acquisition Land Use Priorities

The purpose of this Decision Record is to document both the completion of the environmental review and the approval of an amendment to the Kremmling Resource Management Plan (RMP).

#### **DECISION**

It is my decision to select the proposed action as analyzed and described in Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-03, dated March 24, 2000, titled "Kremmling Resource Management Plan Amendment - Land Acquisition Land Use Priorities". This decision amends the Kremmling Resource Management Plan as described in the attached Plan Amendment. The management changes include the following:

- \* Land use priorities and management prescriptions are established for fourteen separate parcels of land acquired in the Kremmling Field Office since the original RMP was written in 1984. The land use priority definitions, including compatible and excluded uses are identified in the 1984 RMP. The priorities and prescriptions assigned to each parcel, as well as the parcel locations are identified in Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-03.
- \* Land use priorities and management prescriptions for future land acquisitions in the Kremmling Field Office will be identified and established in specific environmental documents prepared for each individual land acquisition.

#### RATIONALE

The Kremmling Field Office has acquired numerous parcels of land since the RMP was completed in 1984. The RMP did not provide a mechanism to establish land use planning priorities or prescriptions for these acquired properties. This is in conflict with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act which requires land use planning for all public lands administered by the BLM. This Plan Amendment establishes land use priorities for those acquired lands and additionally provides the mechanism to establish land use planning for future acquisitions when the lands are acquired.

#### MONITORING

This RMP Amendment will be monitored in accordance with the monitoring plan for the current RMP.

#### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The views of the public have been sought throughout the planning and decision making process. The Notice of Intent for the Resource Management Plan Amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in August, 1999. In addition, approximately 140 letters announcing the initiation of the planning amendments were mailed to adjoining landowners, affected interest groups, and various governmental agencies. Very few comments were received and they were considered during preparation of the environmental analysis. The Notice of Availability for the Resource Management Plan Amendment/EA was published in the Federal Register and local newspapers in March, 2000, and was also mailed to all individuals or entities that had previously commented on the proposal. No comments were received as a result of the Notice of Availability or public meeting.

#### CONSISTENCY

This plan is consistent with the plans, programs, and policies of other Federal agencies and of state and local governments.

#### AVAILABILITY OF THIS DOCUMENT

Additional copies of the RMP Amendment are available on request at the Kremmling Field Office, 1116 Park Avenue, P.O. Box 68, Kremmling, Colorado 80459, 970-724-3437.

Recommended: 5/2

Date

6/8/2000 pate Linda M. Grøss

Kremmling Field Manager

Approved:

Ann J. Morgan

\_State Director

# Resource Management Plan Amendment

# Land Acquisition Land Use Priorities

#### INTRODUCTION

This RMP Amendment establishes land use priorities and management prescriptions for fourteen separate parcels of land recently acquired in the Kremmling Field Office. The Amendment also provides the mechanism to establish land use priorities for future acquisitions during the processing of the acquisition.

#### RESOURCE MANAGEMENT DECISIONS

\* Land use priorities and management prescriptions are established for fourteen separate parcels of land acquired in the Kremmling Field Office since the original RMP was written in 1984. Vehicle use is limited to designated roads and trails on all the parcels. Snowmobiles operating on snow are exempted from this limitation. The following priorities are assigned to each parcel:

#### Parcel Number Land Use Priority

NP-1	Wildlife (Limited)
NP-2	Recreation (Limited)
NP-3	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-1	Recreation (Limited)
MP-2	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat)(Limited)
MP-3	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat)(Limited)
MP-4	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-5	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-6	Livestock Grazing and Water (along Barger Gulch) (Limited)
MP-7	Recreation (Limited)
MP-8	Wildlife (Limited)
MP-9	Livestock Grazing (Limited)
MP-10	No Priority (Limited)
MP-11	Protected Area (Threatened and Endangered Plant Habitat) (Limited)

The location of these parcels is depicted on the maps attached to Environmental Assessment Record CO-KRFO-00-03.

\* Land use priorities and management prescriptions for future land acquisitions in the Kremmling Field Office will be

identified and established in specific environmental documents prepared for each individual land acquisition.

## PLAN IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND MAINTENANCE

With the exception of the "limited" vehicle use decision, this RMP Amendment will be implemented upon approval by the Colorado State Director. Implementation of the "limited" vehicle use decision will require subsequent analysis to identify designated routes.

Monitoring and maintenance actions for the RMP Amendment decisions will be accomplished in accordance with procedures identified in the existing RMP.